

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-11 EA-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-07 SAJ-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 IGA-02

EB-07 INT-05 OES-06 COME-00 AGR-05 /114 W

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R 060936Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 226

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 1717

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN

SUBJECT: FARAKKA BARRAGE: BANGLADESH CONCERN UNALTERED

1. THE DOUBTS VOICED INFORMALLY BY MFA DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR SUBHINTINENT ABDUL BARI REGARDING THE CUTBACK IN INDIAN WITHDRAWALS AT FARAKKA BARRAGE (DACCA 1609) ARE NOW THE SUBJECT OF RATHER ENGTSIVE PRESS TREATMENT. ACCORDING TO THE DACCA PRESS, OBSERVATION OF FLOWS IN THE GANGA OVER RECENT DAYS DO NOT RPT NOT SUPPORT THE INDIAN CLAIMS THAT WITHDRAWALS AT FARAKKA BARRAGE HAVE BEEN CURTAILED. THE PRESS REPORTS CITE AVERAGE FLOWS OVER THE PERIOD MARCH 25-APRIL 3 FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS. THE AMOUNT FOR THE PERIOD THIS YEAR WAS 24,100 AS AGAINST 63,900 IN 1975, 77,200 IN 1974, 77, 10 IN 1973 AND 83,100 IN 1972. THE BANGLADESHIS APPEAR TO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE SHARP DROP IS WHOLLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO WITHDRAWALS AT FARAKKA AND THEY SUGGEST -- BUT DO NOT ADDUCE EVIDENCE -- THAT TH FLOW ON MARCH 25 WAS ROUGHLY THE SAME AS ON APRIL 4.

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2. THE EFFECT OF THE CONTINUED WITHDRAWALS HAS BEEN TO ADD EVEN MORE ITEMS TO THE BANGLADESHIS LITANY OF GRIEVANCES.

- THE SPINNING OF YARNS IN TEXTILE MILLS IN RAJSHAHI JSHAS BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY A FALL IN THE USUAL HUMIDITY.
- GROUND WATER IN AREAS ADJACENT TO THE PADMA (THE GANGA IN BANGLADESH) HAS FALLEN FROM 18 TO 38 FEET.
- FODDER IS SCARCE ALONG THE PADMA, AND CATTLE ARE SUFFERING.
- IRRIGATION ALONG THE RIVER IS REDUCED, AND CROPS THREATENED.
- SALINITY IN THE BHAIRAB RIVER AT KHULNA HAS REACHED AN "ALL-TIME HIGH."
- TRADE IN KUSHTIA IS OFF SINCE COUNTRY BOATS CANNOT MOVE.

3. COMMENT: BDG TOLD US PRIVATELY AT THE END OF FEBRUARY THAT BANGLADESH NEEDED SOME GESTURE FROM THE INDIANS BEFORE IT COULD AGREE TO MEET ON FARAKKA BUT CLEARLY THE REDUCTION IN WITHDRAWALS AT FARAKKA HAS NOT PROVEN SUFFICIENT. IT MAY BE THAT THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE FARAKKA ISSUE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ITS SOLUTION FOR THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION WHICH MAY FEEL THAT, IN A TIME WHEN NATIONAL UNITY AND THE COHESIVENESS OF THE MILITARY ARE LESS THAN COMPLETE, THE EXISTENCE OF EXTERNAL BOGEY IS IMPORTANT. IT MAY ALSO BE THAT BANGLADESH IS MAKING THE "WORST CASE" RE FARAKKA IN HOPES THAT IT CAN BRING WORLD OPINION TO BEAR ON INDIA. LASTLY, AND PERHAPS ALL TOO TRUE, THE BDG AND THE BANGLADESHIS MAY BELIEVE ALL THEIR ALLEGATIONS ABOUT THE EFFECT OF THE FARAKKA WITHDRAWALS, AND SEE THEMSELVES AS HELPLESS BEFORE A CALLOUS INDIA. BUT WHICHEVER OF THESE FACTORS MAY UNDERLIE THE PRESENT BANGLADESH ATTITUDE, THE INTRANSIGENCE NOW EVIDENT SEEMS INCREASINGLY CONTERPRODUCTIVE IN THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION.

BOYDER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, WATER DIVERSION, FARAKKA BARRAGE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DACCA01717
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760131-0185
From: DACCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760494/aaaadcja.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 JUN 2004 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <07 JUN 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FARAKKA BARRAGE: BANGLADESH CONCERN UNALTERED
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, BG, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006